

Resource Conservation District Watershed Coordinator Grant Program

Report to the Legislature
January 10, 2002



Gray Davis, Governor

Resources Agency
Mary Nichols, Secretary for Resources

Department of Conservation
Darryl Young, Director

Division of Land Resource Protection
Erik Vink, Assistant Director



Table of Contents

Subject	Page
Executive Summary	1
Overview	3
Evaluation	5
Partnerships and Coalition Building	6
Acquiring Watershed Funding	6
Meeting Performance Objectives	7
Statewide Benefits of the Program	8
Program Findings	9
Recommendations	12
<u>Appendix 1 – Maps</u>	
Watershed Coordinator Grants Mapped by RCD	13
Watershed Coordinator Grants Mapped by Watershed	14
<u>Appendix 2 – Tables</u>	
Table 1: Resource Conservation District Watershed Partnerships	15
Table 2: Additional Watershed Improvement Funding Obtained	17
Table 3: RCD Objectives and Performance Measures	18
<u>Appendix 3 – Fact Sheets</u>	
Watershed Fact Sheets	25

Executive Summary

The Watershed Coordinator Grant Program for Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) was established in the Budget Act of 2000 to fund watershed coordinators throughout the state. As used in other states, and in a few California watersheds, watershed coordinators bring diverse stakeholder groups together to implement consensus-based improvements to the watershed. This includes reducing erosion and pollutants, restoring fisheries and habitats, removing noxious weeds, reducing fire danger, and expanding public education. Coordinators build coalitions for watershed improvement, obtain funds for those improvements, carry out those projects, and educate residents of the watersheds on how to best manage and care for them.

Approximately half way through the funding availability for the RCD-based coordinators, the program has exceeded most expectations. The major accomplishments of the 30 funded coordinators are as follows:

- ◆ **Over \$13 million in additional watershed funding has been obtained** as a result of the watershed coordinators. This funding for California watershed projects would have gone to other purposes or even to other states without the efforts of the coordinators. With approximately \$650,000 paid to date for coordinator costs, this represents **a 20:1 return on investment**. An additional \$15 million in grants and other funding requests is still pending.
- ◆ **More than 320 businesses, federal, state and local agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations have been included as partners** for watershed improvement activities. This represents **a four-fold increase** over the number proposed in the grant applications.
- ◆ **Forty-six grant objectives have been completed** of the 62 short-term objectives, including on-the-ground projects, education projects, watershed group establishment and project funding. This represents approximately **73% of the current watershed objectives completed**, with a further 70 objectives of the total 132 proposed intended to be completed in June 2002, or with completion dates beyond the scope of the program. All of the longer-term objectives are in progress.

Budget language included requirements to report to the Legislature on: individual grant objectives, performance measures, and an assessment of program benefits. The Department conducted workshops with RCDs to gather input on the best features of a watershed coordinator grant program in the summer and early fall of 2000, and released a Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) in October 2000.

Seventy-eight grant applications totaling over \$5.3 million, were received by the Department in December 2000. A multi-agency review team scored the applications, and 30 of the 78 applications were funded. Grant agreements were signed by April 2001, and coordinators were hired by RCDs from March to May 2001.

The applicants' workplans and objectives varied considerably in scope and content, reflecting the differences in watersheds, local needs and previous RCD watershed experience. Districts with existing programs focused on expanding programs to other waterways or on specific projects, while Districts newer to watershed programs focused more on organization and education.

Although this report is termed a "final" report in the Supplemental Language, funding for the program is available through June 30, 2002.

Because this is a new grant program and many RCDs were not familiar with the program invoicing requirements, the required Department staff support exceeded expectations.

The Department believes that the \$2 million investment has resulted in improved watershed health through on-the-ground projects, education and the involvement of citizens, businesses and other levels of government. Although the program only had sufficient funding to provide coordinators for fewer than half of the Resource Conservation Districts that applied, watershed education, cooperation and funding have risen markedly wherever coordinators have been funded.

Overview

The Watershed Coordinator Grant (WCG) Program was established by the Budget Act of 2000, to provide \$2 million in grants to Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) for the purpose of hiring watershed coordinators. The Department of Conservation (Department) was authorized one position to administer the program. The Budget Act required the Department to develop criteria for the grants including accountability measures, performance standards and reporting requirements. The Department was also required to report to the Legislature on these items at least 30 days before funds could be encumbered for the grants. This initial report was sent to the Legislature and Legislative Analyst in January 2001.

Item 3480-101-001 of the Supplemental Report of the Budget Act directed the Department to report to the Legislature on applicants, awardees and grant objectives by March 1, 2001, and to prepare a final report on the program in January 2002. The second report was sent to the Legislature in March 2001; and this document is the third required report. Specifically, the Supplemental Report directed the Department to report on the evaluation of the grant objectives, an overall assessment of the success of the program as evidenced by grantees' progress in meeting goals, and the statewide benefit of the program.

In August 2000, the Department hired a consultant to conduct six workshops, involving Department staff and over a hundred RCD staff and directors in locations around the state. Based on comments gathered from the workshops, the consultant prepared a number of recommendations that formed important parts of the WCG program.

The Supplemental Budget Language requirements also helped to shape the program. As part of each application, the Department required that overall goals, objectives, tasks to complete the objectives, and performance measures to evaluate objective completion be included. This required RCDs to



Chileno Creek on Gale Ranch, Marin County RCD

Watershed coordinators wear many hats. As watershed coordinator for Tomales Bay in the Marin County RCD, Nancy Scolari has worked to improve communication between the many community groups that have an interest in the watershed. She is also a champion for change, working with government agencies and private property owners to improve wetlands and natural habitat.

"Before money became available for a fulltime watershed coordinator, we'd get calls from landowners and organizations asking for our help with watershed issues, but in some cases we had to say 'Sorry, we don't have the money to address it at this time,'" Scolari said. "Now we have the resources to take the steps necessary to really help them."

Scolari is excited about successes in persuading ranch owners to participate in revegetation projects on Chileno Creek. The creek passes through pastureland for a number of ranches in the sub-watershed. Through the efforts of the coordinator, five ranchers have agreed to fence their pastures to keep cattle out of the creek bed and allow revegetation of the creek banks.

Watershed coordinators also must wear a fundraising hat for those improvements. Scolari and her co-coordinator, Melissa McCoy, have been tremendously successful in obtaining grant money. The Marin County RCD was awarded more than \$1.2 million in 2001, from such agencies as the State Water Resources Control Board, California Department of Fish and Game and the State Coastal Conservancy.

Nancy also wears a journalist's hat, publishing a newsletter for property owners within the watershed.

"This grant through the Department of Conservation for watershed coordinators has been liberating. We now have the time to get to meetings and inform landowners," Scolari said.

develop an integrative approach that addressed complex watershed issues on a comprehensive basis.

In October 2000, the Department sent the Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) to all of the 103 RCDs and to a number of interested parties. During the 45-day application period, Department staff conducted four workshops around the state. The grant program emphasized partnerships, greater-than-minimum match provided, and demonstrable benefits to the watershed. The RFGA also required a workplan to be incorporated into a contract agreement, thereby avoiding a protracted contract drafting period which RCDs had found to have slowed down other grants.

In December 2000, 78 WCG applications requesting over \$5 million were received from RCDs from every part of the state. The applications were reviewed by a team of an experienced watershed coordinator and staff from the Department, USEPA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The highest-scoring 30 applications were funded, leaving 48 applications for more than \$3 million unfunded. Most of the unfunded applications met minimum requirements for funding but could not be accommodated under the \$2 million funding amount. Grant awards were announced in January 2001.

Using an expedited contracting process, the Department completed grant agreements with all RCDs in February-March 2001. This allowed RCDs approximately 16 months to execute their contracts.

As recommended at the RCD workshops, invoices have been paid on a monthly basis, rather than the more-traditional quarterly basis. This has created a greater workload for both RCDs and Department staff, but has provided a more stable income stream for districts with cash flow issues. Although the Department allowed an advance program for applicants with demonstrated cash-flow needs, with a multi-month payback period, only three districts took advantage of the offer. It is also important to note that Natural Resources Conservation Service provided funding for RCDs to use as the cash portion of the match required under Public Resources Code Section 9084 (b)(3). Without this assistance, a number of smaller districts would not have been able to take advantage of the WCG program, including a number of very successful grantees.

Quarterly reports describing progress toward meeting objectives and performance measures were required from grantees in June, September and December. The December report, an expanded quarterly report, is the basis for this final report to the Legislature.

Department staff have been in frequent contact with the coordinators and Districts in a concerted effort to meet with each coordinator in the field, to answer questions they might have on administration, and to provide advice on how best to achieve grant objectives.

In evaluating the success of the WCG program, it must be kept in mind that RCDs are volunteer conservation organizations, with unpaid directors providing grass-roots conservation services and projects as varied as the state itself. Some RCDs are large quasi-governmental organizations, employing paid staffs to work on major river restoration, erosion control, wildfire protection and other resource projects. In contrast, other RCDs are small organizations where the volunteer directors do nearly all the work themselves. This variation is a national phenomenon, consistent with the RCD mission to provide locally-led conservation.

Just as the scope of RCDs varies significantly, so too do the workplans for the WCG program. While some RCDs seek to expand already-successful watershed programs to other streams within their districts, others are just starting to form the partnerships and attract the funding that are necessary to bring improvement to their watersheds. Some workplans called for obtaining grants to finance on-the-ground restoration projects, while others focused on educating watershed residents to reduce pollution to creeks and streams.

One characteristic shared by all the RCDs involved in the WCG program, and by all the watershed coordinators, has been a strong commitment to improving the health of the watersheds in which they work, and a desire for the program to become a success for their district and all RCDs.

Evaluation

As the Department began the program, it determined that watershed coordinator duties needed to be flexible to meet the needs of local communities. As a result, RCDs were asked to explain in their grant application what would be a successful watershed coordination effort in their local area. How would they measure their own performance? Among other attributes, grant applications were scored using these standards.



Upper Merced River Watershed Council Meeting, Mariposa County RCD

At the gateway to Yosemite National Park, the Upper Merced River Watershed Council works with the nearly one hundred stakeholders in the region. Thanks to the efforts of Mariposa County RCD Watershed Coordinator Katy Duffin, the council was born in June 2001 to be a clearinghouse and catalyst for stakeholders to share information with each other.

"Mariposa is a relatively small town," said Duffin. "I already knew 50 percent of the people, so when I contacted them about the watershed council they said, 'OK, what can we do to help?'"

What Duffin found was that several agencies were doing similar things and duplicating effort.

"The watershed council gives them a forum to exchange ideas and information to operate more effectively," she said. "It has been very rewarding to bring these groups together."

Duffin has been able to create several new partnerships for the district, including the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Sierra Nevada Alliance, Mariposa/ Oakhurst Unified School District, Miwok Tribal Council and UC Merced.

"We have a great wealth of experience and enthusiasm in the private and public sector as it pertains to the Upper Merced River watershed," said Duffin. "It's not a matter of convincing businesses, agencies and landowners to join us. They are now coming to us, offering their help and expertise."

The key to success in bringing so many people together and keeping them together has been the teambuilding work of the watershed coordinator.

Learn more about the Upper Merced River Watershed Council online at www.sierratel.com/watershed

The Department looked for other measures that were easily understood, were more objective, and represented a common denominator among watershed efforts. Since effective watershed organizations require stakeholder representation and funding for projects and outreach, partnership building and securing watershed project funding were also used.

An important proviso in evaluating program effectiveness at this time is that program funding runs through June 2002. Thus, while this document represents a “final” report as required by the Supplemental Language, the watershed coordinators will continue to work through June 2002, and this report only covers up to the mid-point of the program. Described below are the effectiveness of RCDs in meeting the three program evaluation measures: 1) Partnerships and Coalition Building; 2) Acquiring Watershed Funding; and 3) Meeting Performance Objectives:

◆ **Partnerships and Coalition Building**

Because it is such a critical item in the watershed process, the Department asked RCDs to report on all watershed partnerships formed as a result of the grant program. Under this measurement, the program as a whole has been extremely successful. **Over 320 partnerships have been formed** with federal, state and local agencies, educational institutions, businesses and other non-profit organizations throughout the state to improve watershed conditions and work on watershed projects. Not specifically mentioned are additional contacts and relationships formed with thousands of landowners within the watersheds receiving grants. Increasing citizen awareness of watershed issues can significantly improve conditions, through changed behavior and better decision-making. Also, watershed coordination often centers on bringing stakeholders together to understand and gain consensus on watershed issues and projects. Further, finding stakeholders who will actively work on watershed issues, whether private landowners or government agencies, is a critical coordination step. While a number of grants had partnership-building as one of their workplan objectives, others did not call this item out separately. Appendix 2, Table 1 lists partnerships formed within each watershed by the coordinators.

◆ **Acquiring Watershed Funding**

The acquisition of funding to carry out planning and on-the-ground watershed projects is one of the most important successes of the WCG program. So far, the **coordinators have been responsible for obtaining in excess of \$13 million in grants, contributions and matching funds to carry out future watershed work.** An additional \$15 million in grant and other funding requests have been submitted through efforts of the coordinators and are still awaiting a final decision. The coordinators, through their grant efforts, have made locally-based RCDs prime delivery mechanisms for many state agency programs, including many of CALFED’s programs, the Department of Fish and Game’s Coastal Salmon Program, the Department of Water Resources’ Urban Streams Restoration Program and numerous others. Without the WCG program, funds for these and other programs may have gone unallocated or may have been

transferred to other government agencies. Without the coordinators, it would have been more difficult for state agencies to meet their goals of funding locally-based projects and groups.

Also, the coordinators brought millions of dollars of federal and private grant funds into California to address watershed issues. Again, without the WCG program, funding for badly-needed watershed work would likely have gone to other states. Especially in rural areas of the state, the jobs and sense of local self-accomplishment provided by these funds has been extremely beneficial. The program's success resulted in the current return on investment for WCG dollars of approximately 20:1. For every dollar spent by RCDs under the program to date, an additional \$20 was obtained for the local efforts. Appendix 2, Table 2 lists the amount of funding obtained and the amounts still pending as the result of watershed coordinator actions.

◆ **Meeting Performance Objectives**

In the Budget Language, funding was only provided for watershed coordinator grants to RCDs, with no provision for the funds to be used for on-the-ground projects. As noted in earlier reports to the Legislature, the Department interpreted this wording to mean that only positions could be funded through the grants. Thus, funds were granted only for salary and direct support of watershed coordinators. Both the RCDs and the Department quickly found that creating performance measures for positions was much more problematic than it would have been for projects or organizations. A key scoring criteria for the grant applications was effective performance measures; however, because this was a new requirement for RCDs, and because they were considered along with other criteria, the result was that some performance measures were less than



George Wilkins, Watershed Coordinator, Mission RCD

What has been the biggest benefit of funding watershed coordinators? Bottom line: Results!

Without a fulltime coordinator to manage the task of bringing together a huge number of stakeholders, progress on needed projects is difficult at best. Now, dramatic strides are being made.

For example, watershed coordinator George Wilkins of the Mission RCD, which concentrates on the San Luis Rey watershed in San Diego County, has been able to work as a one-on-one liaison between dozens of stakeholders, including government agencies, large agricultural landowners and several Native American tribes in the watershed.

"One of the real strengths of the watershed coordinator position is our neutrality," Wilkins said. "We can bring all sides together and take steps forward to resolve watershed use issues. Now we're ready to go forward with wetlands restoration and comprehensive water quality monitoring."

Wilkins is currently applying for Prop. 13 support to help fund the project, and has several other grant applications pending.

Wilkins organized a large watershed event that took place in November at the Pala Indian Reservation. The event, co-sponsored by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, was a release party for the watershed council's "*San Luis Rey Guidelines*." The guidelines detail issues in the watershed and include suggestions for improvements.

Another benefit of having fulltime watershed coordinators around the state is that many of the coordinators are able to assist other districts, not just their own. "It's all part of the cooperative effort," Wilkins said. "Thanks to the watershed coordinator grant, we can help foster and support public outreach, not only in our own backyard, but the surrounding area too."

optimal. However, all grants have performance measures, and a majority of measures are well thought out and will provide a measure of success in meeting the workplan objectives. Objectives proposed by the Districts were clearer, although some were overly ambitious.

Of the 132 objectives proposed by the districts, 70, or slightly over half, are scheduled for completion in June 2002 or later. It is important to note that completion of objectives is not tied directly to the grant period. A number of the objectives were not designed to be completed within the timeframe of the WCG funding. Under the RFGA, objectives are smaller steps to complete a goal, which is generally three to five years in the future. For instance, reducing sedimentation to a creek by a specified percentage requires baseline monitoring, creation and implementation of the source reduction program, and post-project monitoring. The RFGA recognized and allowed this type of longer-term objective. Of the remaining 62 shorter-term objectives, 46, or **73% have been completed currently, half-way through the pilot period**. The performance measures included in the grant agreements will be a valuable tool to evaluate whether the grantees completed their objectives, but their value at this stage of the program is limited. Appendix 2, Table 3 lists the objectives and current state of completion for each watershed coordinator grant. Appendix 3 includes specific achievements of each grant, and lists the performance measures for all the objectives.

Statewide Benefits of the Program

The Supplemental Language asked the Department to report on the 'statewide benefit' of the program. For a program that is intentionally focused on local watersheds, such a benefit is difficult to quantify. However, thousands of citizens and hundreds of private firms and public agencies statewide that had not been involved with watershed improvement are now involved. Also, over \$13 million in additional funding has been acquired for watershed improvement projects statewide. What cannot be measured at this time is the specific statewide improvement in the health of the state's watersheds due to the program. Additional funding for on-the-ground projects that will result in watershed improvements is only now being received by RCDs. Some of these projects will take months or years to complete, and are outside of the time and scope of this report.

Further, this program is one part of an overall strategy for watershed management in California, and should not be viewed in isolation. A statewide study of watershed partnerships conducted by the Resources Agency and the State Water Resources Control Board found that a key gap in watershed management was in building the local capacity to develop and implement projects. The WCG program, if implemented over the long term, would work to fill that gap.

Program Findings

1. Watershed Coordinators are crucial for the success of watershed improvements. Prior to the WCG program, relatively few of the state's watersheds had a Watershed Coordinator position identified and funded. For those few, results had been impressive, and those that were subsequently funded by the WCG program have been very successful. As the program has progressed, it has become increasingly apparent that stakeholder awareness, consensus building and funding of projects is almost prohibitively difficult without a watershed coordinator position. Over the past several years, state government has designed bond funding and major programs, such as CALFED, that focus on locally-led solutions to resource issues on a watershed basis. And very few of these programs, if any, fund positions rather than strictly on-the-ground projects. Without funded watershed coordinator positions, many of these programs will find it difficult to get their grant dollars to local groups and have successful projects. Also, many watersheds will not be able to acquire funding offered by state, federal or private grant programs for watershed improvements without the availability of a coordinator.
2. Advance administrative training is needed, and more administrative support should be considered. Although standardized invoicing and reporting formats were developed by the Department at the request of the RCDs, numerous districts had problems with administering the grants, particularly with invoicing. A mandatory training class for grantees may help this situation, but it underscores a common problem with RCDs: organizations that are funded largely through project-specific grants have little funding to hire administrative staff, resulting in high



Cantara Loop, Dunsmuir Shasta Valley RCD

The Willow Flycatcher. Not a household name to most, but the rare species of bird is a key beneficiary of the work being done by the Shasta Valley RCD and its Watershed Coordinator, Vince Cloward.

Thanks to the Watershed Coordinator grant, Shasta Valley RCD is embarking on an ambitious project along the upper Sacramento River near Dunsmuir. "We're surveying 36 miles along the Sacramento River to evaluate the best sites to plant 11,500 willow cuttings, to enhance riparian habitat which includes the Willow Flycatcher," Cloward said.

In July, 1991, a Southern Pacific train tanker spilled a pesticide into the Sacramento River near Dunsmuir, destroying thousands of fish and fish habitat. It took months for the river to recover. In cooperation with Union Pacific, Shasta Valley RCD monitors the Sacramento River ecosystem, assessing the health of the river and the plants and animals that inhabit the watershed. Having a fulltime watershed coordinator has helped Shasta Valley RCD broaden that program.

When Union Pacific was installing a guardrail to make the area safer for train transport, Cloward worked with the railroad, giving advice on how best to design the Cantara loop guardrail. "There were boating and fishing concerns, along with the diversion of water flow to be considered," Cloward explained. "We were able to work that into the design plan," he said.

And, as has been the case with all of the watershed coordinators, Cloward has been instrumental in creating strong partnerships with landowners, private industry and government agencies. "We've established a volunteer network to continually evaluate the quality of the water and the surrounding environment and we've developed strong working relationships with the Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Forest Service and the Regional Water Quality Control Board."

Not to mention a strong and successful association with the Willow Flycatcher.

turnover and staff unfamiliar with state invoicing procedures. Because of the lack of permanent RCD administrative staff, a number of Districts chose to hire consultants rather than hire staff. Districts which hired consultants contributed a disproportionately large number of invoicing and reporting problems.

3. [Program success resulted in independent funding](#). In some cases, the WCG program served as seed money for watershed coordinators, who subsequently obtained outside funding to continue their positions. A permanent grant program would result in additional watershed coordinators establishing self-sufficient programs.
4. [Coordinating the coordinators could result in better program effectiveness](#). The Department did not receive funding for regular watershed coordinator meetings, but an ad hoc meeting of some coordinators at the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts annual meeting provided a tremendous amount of cross-communication, and showed the potential for synergy that regular meetings could provide. At the meeting coordinators learned from their peers of public contact, grant writing and education techniques that could be used statewide. Future programs should include a regular meeting component to assure that all coordinators are aware of the best and most effective watershed improvement methods.
5. [Any future program will need to address RCD cash flow issues and invoicing problems](#). The majority of the state's RCDs are funded in large part by grants, and thus have serious cash-on-hand issues. This led to a recommendation at the early workshops for monthly invoicing so that districts could have adequate cash with which to pay their new watershed coordinators. Unfortunately, the majority of monthly invoices came into the Department with errors or incomplete, requiring significant Department staff time to correct, and slowing down invoice payments significantly. While the Department provided a standardized invoicing and reporting process at the request of RCDs, it appears that standardized forms may be more effective. Although originally requested by the RCDs, the Department received a number of complaints on monthly billing and on the paperwork required for each invoice. Any future program should allow a significant advance, and should allow for optional monthly billing. To avoid pulling staff from other tasks to work on invoices, future programs should ensure that the Department is adequately staffed to both process invoices in a timely manner, and to carry out necessary report evaluations and contract revisions.
6. [Use of expedited contract process and boilerplate language resulted in significant timesavings](#). Based on contracting periods for similar grant programs, using an expedited process resulted in a timesavings of three to four months. This allowed more time for actual watershed coordinator activities.

7. Workshops were helpful in design of administrative aspects of the program. The Department took into consideration comments and suggestions received during the initial workshops when developing program administrative requirements and the grant agreement.
8. The program could benefit by expanding allowable costs beyond salaries to include costs associated with coordinating activities. The average cost for salary and benefits of the 30 positions funded was \$68,500 for 16 months (the average for 12 months was \$54,835). The program also funded some of the administrative support costs (i.e. office space, utilities, mileage, etc.); however, a number of the coordinators were hampered by the inability to pay expenses for meeting rooms, postage, printing, equipment rental (i.e. projector, screen, etc.) and other coordinating activities.

Recommendations

1. Use the watershed coordinator grant program as a delivery mechanism for state and federal programs. A number of state and federal programs are aimed at funding resource conservation or restoration activities on a watershed basis, or using local groups to carry out projects. Examples include CALFED grants, DFG Salmonid Restoration Grants, SWRCB 319 (h) grants and federal grants. RCD Watershed Coordinators provide a locally-led state-sanctioned mechanism to carry out conservation activities. The coordinators are ideally placed to utilize state and federal grants at the local level, and can prevent duplicative spending of scarce resource dollars.
2. Regional fluctuation in costs warrant that grant awards range between \$60,000 to \$80,000 annually. Regional costs vary significantly throughout the state, therefore the program needs to have the flexibility to respond to variable costs of living. In addition, the program should cover costs associated with coordinating activities such as room and equipment rental, tours, etc. The uniqueness of this program is that it supports positions rather than projects. Incorporating the costs of coordinating activities within the grant program will not blur this distinction but instead provide the tools for more effective coordination at minimal additional cost.
3. Grant periods should be a minimum of two years to ensure effective coordination. Providing two-year grant periods will reduce the probabilities of high turnover and lack of continuity among coordinators. Since trust and personal contacts at the local level are major portions of the coordinators' jobs, maintaining continuity is critical.
4. Continue to require accountability through performance measures. Locally led conservation efforts, focusing on local needs and wants, with significant local buy-in, is the essence of a watershed program. Rather than mandating what coordinators should or should not do, state government should allow locals the flexibility to implement their own solutions, particularly in working to meet state and federal mandates or goals. One-size-fits-all watershed coordination efforts would be unsuccessful in a state as diverse as California. With responsibility to formulate their own plans, however, there must be local accountability for expending state funds. The use of performance measures in future grants should be refined, and should include science-based measures where appropriate, but should remain to ensure accountability. Also, as the state increases its understanding of watershed management, performance measures should recognize appropriate statewide policies and principles for watershed programs.